

CULTURAL TRANSMISSION THROUGH SYMBOLS

Abdukhalimova Sarvinozkhon Usmanali kizi

Doctoral student of the 2nd course of
the Kokand State University,
xaydaraliyeva95@mail.ru

Annotation

This article explores the integral role of symbols and communication in human culture as continuous and dynamic processes that shape interpersonal relationships. It defines symbols as multi-faceted tools for expression and understanding, emphasizing their significance in conveying meaning across generations. The article highlights the complexities involved in encoding and decoding messages, where individual perceptions create discrepancies in meaning, leading to differences in communication outcomes. Furthermore, it categorizes interaction patterns into symmetrical and complementary dynamics, illustrating how these structures influence communication behavior. Ultimately, the piece underscores the fluidity of symbols and the inherent imperfection of human communication, both of which are essential for personal development and the evolution of cultural knowledge.

Keywords and expressions: symbols, human communication, encoding and decoding, meanings, symmetrical interactions, complementary interactions, feedback, interpersonal relationships, cultural transmission, personal development

Introduction

The necessity for coordinated human behavior, the consolidation and preservation of acquired knowledge, and the transmission of information from generation to generation have led to the emergence of various forms of symbols. The term "symbol" holds significant meaning within culture, as it serves as a fundamental mechanism by which individuals can express and communicate their internal states. This article explores the multifaceted nature of symbols, their roles in communication, and their cultural implications. Communication is an essential aspect of human existence, serving as a continuous process that shapes relationships and interactions among individuals. Unlike a linear sequence of events, communication is dynamic—lacking a definitive beginning or end—and continually evolving. Understanding the complexities of this process can provide valuable insights into how individuals encode and decode messages, and how meaning varies in communication.

Methods

This study draws upon qualitative analysis of literature surrounding the concepts of symbols within cultural contexts. Specifically, it examines the relationship between symbols, their meanings (denotation and connotation), and their significance facilitating communication among individuals and groups as well as employs a qualitative approach to analyze the nature of communication and its inherent dynamics. It examines the simultaneous processes of encoding and decoding messages, the impact of feedback on self-perception, and the reciprocal influence of communicators on each other. Additionally, the study explores symmetrical and complementary relationship dynamics within communication frameworks.

Results

1. Definition and Significance of Symbols: Initially, the term "symbol" derived from the Greek word 'sumbolon,' referring to a half of a broken object which acted as a form of identification.

In contemporary understanding, symbols can be seen as representative signs that substitute real objects or phenomena, encapsulating the information they convey.

2. Types of Symbols: Symbols may encompass a wide range of forms, including verbal symbols (words) and non-verbal symbols (gestures, greetings, and ceremonial acts). Cultural symbols dominate the landscape, with examples such as national flags representing allegiance to a state or religious symbols like crosses and crescents signifying faith.

3. Transmission of Knowledge: The portability of symbols allows for the transfer of vast amounts of knowledge and information across generations. Modern mediums like books, films, and digital recordings have become essential for the preservation and dissemination of cultural wisdom.

4. Cultural Variability: Each culture cultivates its unique symbol system, attributing distinct meanings to each symbol. This phenomenon reflects the variability of symbols across different societies, emphasizing that what one group perceives as a symbol may be interpreted differently by another. For example, a flag might merely appear as a piece of fabric to someone unfamiliar with its cultural significance.

5. Denotation vs. Connotation: Symbols possess both denotative and connotative meanings. Denotation refers to the literal, widely accepted meaning recognized by the majority within a culture, while connotation encompasses personal and emotional associations that may vary among individuals. For instance, the denotation of "fox" is a member of the mammalian family Canidae, but its connotation often includes traits of cunningness and craftiness in the Russian cultural context.

- Simultaneous Encoding and Decoding: Human communication involves concurrent encoding and decoding of messages. As one person encodes a message, the recipient simultaneously decodes it, and the decoded information influences the subsequent encoding of the next message. Thus, the meaning derived from communication is never fully identical between individuals.
- Transformation of Meaning: The message conveyed by one person may differ in significance from how it is interpreted by another. This discrepancy occurs because meanings are shaped not solely by the message itself but also by individual perceptions. Consequently, the end result of any communication is the divergence of meanings held by the interlocutors.
- Nature of Communication: Although the variability of meanings suggests imperfection in communication, it does not render it complex or ineffective. Instead, it highlights the nuanced nature of interpersonal interactions, where individuals present themselves in ways they wish to be perceived, and feedback influences self-perception and behavior.
- Behavioral Perspective: Communication can be viewed through a behavioral lens as a series of stimuli and responses, where each participant's behavior serves as both stimulus and reaction. Within this framework, it is vital to assess how one individual's behavior not only influences the other but also shapes ongoing interactions.
- Interactional Scenarios: The dynamics between communicators can manifest in two primary patterns: symmetrical and complementary interactions. Symmetrical communication reflects similar behaviors and minimizes differences, fostering a sense of equality. In contrast, complementary communication maximizes differences, where

roles are defined by a leader-follower dynamic, exemplified by parent-child or teacher-student relationships.

Discussion

The fluidity of symbols highlights their potential to change meaning over time and across regional contexts. This adaptability necessitates an awareness in communication, as individuals may interpret symbols differently based on their experiences and situational contexts. Understanding the distinction between denotation and connotation is crucial in avoiding miscommunication in intercultural interactions. The interplay of symmetrical and complementary behaviors is not imposed on individuals; rather, it emerges from their perceptions and contexts. Participants engage in communication based on their values and the significance attributed to interactions. Understanding these dynamics can enhance interpersonal relationships and foster personal development or, conversely, lead to detrimental impacts on self-concept.

Conclusion

Symbols play an indispensable role in shaping human culture through the facilitation of communication and the preservation of knowledge. Their meanings are not static; they evolve based on cultural contexts, individual experiences, and collective agreements. An awareness of the complexities surrounding symbols is essential for effective communication and the understanding of cultural diversity. As societies continue to develop, the role of symbols will remain pivotal in bridging understanding and fostering connections among individuals and cultures. Human communication is a complex, ongoing process that involves the dynamic interplay of encoding and decoding messages within relationships. The variability in meaning underscores the inherent imperfections of communication, yet it remains vital for social interactions and personal development. Acknowledging these dynamics, including symmetrical and complementary behaviors, is essential for fostering effective communication and understanding the intricate nature of human relationships.

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